

THE CHRISTIAN SCHEME OF REDEMPTION

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LONDON:
AUSTIN & CO.
17, JOHNSON'S COURT,
FLEET STREET, E.C.

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A LECTURE

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THE Atonement is a feature of Christianity which is the pride and glory of its believers. Whatever disadvantages a Christian has to endure, whatever sacrifices and privations his faith may inflict upon him on earth, all such disadvantages, all such privations, and all such sacrifices, are supposed to be sufficiently atoned for by the Christian "scheme of salvation." It has been said that "whatever is built upon a mistake must of itself be a mistake also." If this be correct, the Christian doctrine of the Atonement is one of the greatest mistakes, one of the greatest delusions that was ever entertained by the mind of man. For it is built upon the false assumption of the inherent depravity of human nature. This doctrine of human depravity forming the basis of the orthodox theory of the Atonement is one of the many sad illustrations of the evil influence of Christianity on the minds of its believers. According to the Christian hypothesis, some thousands of years ago man was so imperfectly made that at the first test the material of which he was composed proved so thoroughly deficient of all that is good and excellent that his whole nature became corrupt; hence it was necessary, it is urged, that the blood of Christ should be shed to cleanse the impurities of man's fallen nature. Notwithstanding that this purification was the avowed object of the Atonement, Christians, with that consistency for which they are remarkable, assure us that humanity is still the embodiment of that which is vile, corrupt, and degrading; that vice, in all its glaring forms, is the legitimate consequence of the error which is alleged to have been committed in the Garden of Eden; that this world is a reservoir of crime, and that its inhabitants con-



stantly delight in drinking from this fountain of iniquity. It requires but little reflection to show us that if this gloomy estimate of existence were universally regarded as correct, it would deprive life of its true value, rob it of its beauty and nobility, and convert it truly into a "vale of tears." If ever "divine interposition" were necessary, it is here required to convince these "miserable sinners," who thus view nature "through a glass darkly," that goodness, virtue, and excellence exist largely around us, and that minds not degraded with the notion of "natural depravity" can and have realised their reality, and been charmed with their exalting and inspiring influence. For the Christian to state that man is morally worthless except regenerated by the atoning blood of Christ is not only to belie man, but also to dishonour his God. If a God exists, he should be morally superior to man. He could not therefore be guilty of such injustice as to make mankind incapable of good and then damn them for being bad. Fortunately, we do not lack proof that this notion of "inherent depravity" is as false as it would be degrading. Throughout society real virtue is honoured and admired. It is the goodness in a person's character which we all respect and venerate. The hypocrite knows this; hence he assumes "a virtue if he has it not," because he feels that virtue possesses advantages which vice under the most polished phase cannot command. Now, this general love and preference for the good and true would not be manifested if mankind were naturally depraved. Secularists are sometimes accused of undervaluing human dignity. But, I ask what part of Secularism forms such a low grovelling estimate of human nature as Christianity here exhibits in this doctrine of human depravity? When we peruse the records of history, and read of the many self-denying acts of men who have sought to promote the welfare of their race; when we witness the various efforts at the present day that are being made to alleviate the woe and misery of a so-called divinely-governed world, we cannot believe that man is radically depraved. On the contrary, we have faith in his inherent goodness, in the nobility of his nature. We think that the words of Jeremiah that "the heart of man is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked," are far inferior to the spirit which inspired Hamlet when he said, "What

a piece of work is man! how noble in reason! how infinite in faculties! in form and moving how express and admirable! in action how like an angel! in apprehension how like a god! the beauty of the world! the paragon of animals!" We recognise the fact that man is but the result of his education. If he is surrounded with depraved conditions, if he is subjected to corrupting influences, if he is impregnated with a degrading faith, then something has been done to make him a living illustration of a depraved doctrine. But if we cultivate his better feelings, if we foster that desire for the true, the beautiful, and the chaste, which is to be found allied with our nature in the morning of life—if we place a child in healthy conditions, if we encourage the better part of his nature during childhood, we shall then have a character which will be a lasting refutation to the degrading doctrines of human depravity. How can it be expected that human worth will be appreciated, and human virtue encouraged when men are taught that without religion the performance of good works is an impossibility. Once impress mankind with the notion that the virtue of the "unregenerated" is but a "splendid vice," and that "the wisdom of the world is but foolishness with God," and they are then deprived of that faith in human effort, and robbed of that self-reliance which should be the pride of their existence. The tendency of such teaching is to retard improvement, making virtue the result of accident rather than the growth of vigour. It deprives the heroes of the past of that glory in which their memories were enshrined. At its frown the mantle of honour disappears from that patient philosopher who devoted his life to the cause of Athenian liberty. In its presence the labours of Cicero, who perished in defence of the remnants of liberty in ancient Rome, become powerless. Under its influence we fail to recognise the courage of the patriot, the benevolence of the philanthropist, or the philosophy of the student. Truth, sobriety, honour, rectitude, valour, devotion, and every virtue of which man is capable, are all valueless if they do not spring from faith in the blood of the Lamb? Talk of blasphemy!—what greater blasphemy can be uttered than to charge a God of love and mercy with creating his children so vile, so corrupt, and so depraved that of themselves they can do no good thing. What a picture this

scheme of salvation presents of its God! Here is a loving father who has so arranged that millions of his children shall be doomed to eternal misery unless they comply with a certain condition the compliance with which to many of them is an utter impossibility. And what is this condition? Is it necessarily a life of utility? Is it moral excellence? Is it the cultivation of our intellect? Is it sincerity of belief? Is it the devotion of a life to the cause of truth? Nothing of the kind. It is a belief that God, who, having placed his children upon the verge of ruin, refuses to allow them to escape, except that his eldest child is tortured, crucified, and offered up as an atonement for an alleged wrong committed by his other children. A system based upon such a scheme of salvation as this cannot be "the gift of a loving father, but rather the purchased equivalent of an exacting tyrant."

The history of the atonement is a history of credulity, sacrifice, and injustice. From its records, we learn how the human mind has had to struggle with superstition, how it has had to combat the various machinations employed by an unprincipled or misguided priesthood. Conscious of their inability to cope successfully with the intellect of the earth, the early advocates of religion appealed to the worst of human passions, and if they failed to convince, and win the people by their teachings, they sought to crush them by their power. Doubting the inherent strength and vitality of their principles, they deemed their system impotent and insecure, unless cemented by the blood of one or more of their victims. Hence it is that the sacrifice of life, to appease the wrath of a supposed angry God, has formed the basis of all primitive systems of religion. Remembering the nature of religion, and the mode in which it was first promulgated, appealing as it did frequently to an ignorant and barbarous people, it is not surprising that its exponents deemed it necessary, in order to secure favour with the people, to introduce a principle of sacrifice, or propitiation for the crimes and misdoings of those who accepted their faith. By this method, the priests not only awakened the fears and rivetted the credulity of their victims, but they also made them ready objects for further debasement and degradation. Eighteen hundred years ago amidst ignorance and religious fanaticism, men were taught to believe that

they were "fallen creatures," that they or some one for them had committed a sin, which had caused a God of infinite love to give them over to eternal perdition, unless a sufficient sacrifice was made to satisfy his anger and regain his pleasure. Then it was that the mind was prepared for the reception of a degrading doctrine, then it was that the priests taught that unjust and fatal figment of an atonement for sins, and a propitiation for crime to minds distracted with doubts and appalled with fear.

One phase of the atonement at an early period of its history, was that the sinful worshippers should undertake voluntary sacrifice and undergo self-imposed suffering in their own persons, that they should sever themselves from the world, and endure the dreary sorrows of solitude, or, as it is recorded in the Old Testament, humble and afflict themselves to secure the favour of God. Dr. Murdoch in the appendix (a) to his discourse upon the atonement says that "the common opinion, from the second century down to the Reformation, was, that on a person becoming a Christian, all his sins were cancelled, and for the sins he might afterwards commit, he must suffer penance, fast, and pray, unless he could atone for them all by martyrdom. But this simple and original plan of sacrifice, it would appear, did not answer the purpose of the priests. It not only failed to bring them any pecuniary reward, but it had a tendency to weaken their influence over the people, for so much personal suffering and penance was calculated to cause the believers to rebel and forsake the faith. Hence it became necessary to devise some means by which the priests should not only maintain their spiritual power, but also increase their pecuniary profit. The doctrine of personal atonement, therefore, was altered into vicarious suffering. The assassins of Syria, a barbarous tribe whom the crusaders came in contact with, lashed the images of their gods before they worshipped them, and then threw the burdens of their sins upon their divinities. The Jews obtained forgiveness for their sins by sending a scapegoat laden with their iniquities into the wilderness, or by offering the firstlings of their flocks upon the altar. The Catholic priests are more accommodating, they save their votaries the inconvenience of personal suffering by making them purchase so many masses to be said

for the benefit of their souls. The ancient Britons offered up holocausts of burnt victims to satisfy their superstitious desires, and history informs us how the Celtic tribes annually assembled for the celebration of their horrible rites at Stonehenge and other sacred places. The same spirit pervades the religion of the Old Testament. From beginning to end it is a religion of blood, murder, and sacrifice. If the God of the New Testament be the same being as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, why then certainly he was but consistent in his crowning act of cruelty, and the Christian doctrine of the atonement by the death of Christ was but a fitting culmination to ages of blood and injustice; ages when the finest aspirations of the nation were crushed, when the intellect of the earth was laid prostrate, when the noblest instincts of man's nature were perverted, and the mind of mankind awed and paralysed with terror at the inhuman spectacle of a bleeding and crucified God. And what was this exhibition of barbarity at the sight of which it is said "Sympathising nature was convulsed, the sun was suddenly enveloped in midnight, darkness, and confusion reigned?" When we come to examine its details, we shall find that it is the very embodiment of injustice, inutility, and inconsistency; destitute of any quality suitable for our adoption, any example deserving of our imitation, and any theme worthy of our veneration.

The author of the "History of the Doctrine of a Future Life" gives an elaborate account of the five theoretic modes of salvation entertained by the different Christian denominations. To "unregenerated" minds it appears somewhat remarkable that the divine plan of redemption should be so obscure that its believers should differ so widely as to what was the object of the death of Christ. The Augustinian theory of the Atonement which was taught by the Church during the early centuries was that men were doomed to hell through the fall of Adam, and that Christ's death cancelled the sin committed, and thus saved them from being utterly lost. The Calvinists believe that God foresaw that Adam would fall, and that posterity would be damned; he therefore selected a few to be His chosen servants, while the rest would have to go to the devil. Before, however, the few could be saved it was considered necessary in the order of God's providence for Christ to suffer to atone for

the God-like error which had been committed. So palpably unjust and inhuman is this belief that the few who still retain it are bound to modify it considerably in their advocacy. It must occur, moreover, to the most superficial reasoner, that if God foresaw that Adam would fall, and that posterity would be damned, that he, being all-powerful, would prevent such an awful calamity. Besides, if God were so considerate as to "elect a few to be saved," would it not have been better to have extended his kindness and included in his favour the whole human race? Such an act of justice would be more in keeping with impartiality, and certainly more worthy of a beneficent God. The third plan of salvation is that held by the evangelical churches. Christians of this school believe that the vicarious sufferings of Christ obtained conditional pardon. In order, however, for persons to partake of the advantages of those sufferings, they must have faith that Christ died as a substitute, that is, that the innocent was punished for the guilty. This is justice peculiar to Christianity. True, sceptical minds may fail to see its force. But that is the fault of Infidelity. If persons only become Christians they can see the justice of anything that was ordained before the world was. It only requires the eye of faith and all difficulties are at once removed. The fourth method of redemption is the Roman Catholic theory. Catholicism while teaching the fall of man and his salvation through Christ also teaches that none will be saved unless they accept the authority of the Church and observe her rites. This is at least consistent. Certainly it is priestcraft, but then what religious sect is there that has not its priests? The difference between Catholicism and Protestantism upon this point is, that while the Catholic is honest and acknowledges the necessity of a priesthood, the Protestant is dishonest in denying its right, and at the same time practising its evils. The principle in both cases is the same, it differs only in degree. The fifth view of the atonement is that held by a small portion of the Universalists, which is in substance that no one is damned beyond his personal sin in this world. If he be ever so vile, all evil at death departs, and he is ushered into heaven, pure and spotless. This certainly must be very gratifying to the immoral and licentious hypocrite whose career of debauchery will be no barrier to his admission into the celestial city. There is

another view entertained by Unitarians and "Liberal Christians" to the effect that salvation depends upon virtuous actions, that God has established certain fixed laws, and the more these laws are violated, the greater will be the damnation. From these different views of the atonement it will be seen how this "simple plan of salvation" has perplexed even the Christian portion of the world. Thomas Aquinas, a man of acute intellect and benevolent heart, actually prayed for the conversion of the devil. This was not a bad idea, because this gentleman thought that by the conversion of his satanic majesty, the supposed inherent curse would be removed, and therefore no necessity would have existed for any atonement. Many of the early Fathers believed that the death of Christ was a satisfaction to the devil, men had fallen into his power through sin, and he refused to let them go without compensation. Christ offered himself, and the devil readily accepted him. "The death of Christ," says Baptist Noel, "was truly the death of God incarnate, and that death was therefore a true and adequate atonement for our sins." Luther represents God as saying to Christ, "Be thou the person which have committed the sins of all men, see therefore that thou pay and satisfy for them." Divested, however, of all sophistry the theory of the atonement according to the teachings of Christianity, is that nearly 6,000 years ago, a good, all-wise, all-powerful, beneficent God, created the world, he then placed man in the midst of a scene, surrounded by temptations it was impossible for him to withstand, God implants in his breast certain desires which, as God, he must have known would produce his ruin. A tree is then placed by God near Adam, bearing the very fruit which God must have known would meet those desires which he had just placed in the mind of Adam. God, all good, then makes a serpent of the worst possible kind in order that he might be successful in tempting Adam to eat. After this, God commands Adam not to eat of the fruit under the penalty of death, knowing at the same time that Adam would eat of it and *not* die. God allows the serpent to succeed in his plan, and then curses the very ground for yielding the tree which he (God) had caused to grow. Not content with this, the Almighty further curses both man and woman to a life of pain and sorrow; further still, he assures them that their posterity shall feel

the terrible effects of doing what it was impossible for them to avoid. At last the *unchangeable* God changes his mind, he will no longer commit wholesale injustice. He determines to send his Son, who is as old as himself, and therefore not his son, to die, but who is invested with immortality and therefore cannot die, to atone for wrongs which had never been committed, by people who had never been born, and who therefore could not very conveniently commit any error. As a conclusion to the whole, this all-merciful being has prepared a material fire of brimstone to burn the immaterial souls of those who fail to see the importance, necessity, and justice, of this jumble of nonsense, cruelty, and absurdity.

Such is the Christian scheme of Salvation, and I ask, in the first place, what is the necessity of an atonement made to rest upon? Is it not alleged to be founded on a single mistake caused by God? Because Adam as the agent of God did one wrong act, his whole nature became thereby depraved, and he then communicated the taint of original sin to all his posterity, making it necessary for God to secure the salvation of his human children by the sacrifice of his first-born and beloved Son. Now admitting for one moment that God was so impotent, that he was so much the slave and victim of a fate superior to his own will as to render it impossible for him to escape from the sacrifice of his own child, except at the cost of universal destruction—I say, admit this, and then will it not occur to our Christian friends, that if this sacrifice was really a necessity, it should have been made immediately after Adam's transgression, so as to have prevented a single generation going to the grave with the curse of original sin unremoved? But according to Bible chronology, God was not disposed to show his fatherly care too soon. He allowed 4,000 years to elapse, and numbers of generations not only to live and die, but to run riot in all descriptions of ignorance and iniquity, ere the tardy reparation was made, or the foul work in the garden of Eden atoned for. Why was this? Did it take God—to whom consideration of time is said to be as nothing—4,000 years to determine how to get out of the difficulty which he himself had created? This cannot be, for according to the Bible, God had the whole plan of the atonement arranged before Adam's fall. Was it that Christ hesitated to obey his

Father's decree? The fact is, if there be any truth in the Christian scheme of Redemption, Christ should have come and given his life a ransom for a "fallen world," as soon as the occasion rendered it necessary. If no man could be saved except those who believed in Christ, what has become of those millions of human beings who passed away prior to his birth? and what will be the fate of those who are now alive, who have never heard and probably never will hear of the name of "Jesus of Nazareth?" Were the former saved by anticipation, and will the latter be excused on account of their ignorance? If so, where was the requirement of the atonement at all? If men could enter heaven without the crucifixion, then Christ need not have suffered at any period. His sorrow, agony, and bloody sweat, might all have been avoided, and numbers of martyrs might have died quietly in their beds, instead of enduring tortures at the stake, or on the rack. Moreover, if the death of Christ were absolutely necessary to redeem the world, it was unjust upon the part of God to permit 4,000 years to elapse before the people had the benefit of his atoning blood. If on the other hand, the crucifixion of the Saviour were not imperative to restore a lost race, then it was a most cruel and unnatural act for a father to give his son to a rabble mob to be tortured and executed, amidst the exultation of a disappointed and fanatical people. Besides, if it were desirable and praiseworthy upon the part of God to send his Son to save the world from eternal damnation, how is it that when he did arrive, so many nations were kept in ignorance of his mission and purpose? Even the Jews, God's peculiar people, had no knowledge whatever that a part of divinity was about to expire on the cross. If a knowledge of Christ be so necessary to man's permanent welfare, if his teachings are so essential to our progress in life, and if the consolations of his faith are so potent and soothing in the hour of death, is it not a reproach to a being possessing all power, that so many of his children are without that hope and guide which we are told would conduct them safely through the valley of the shadow of death? If the regeneration of the world had been the object of Christ, how much better would it have been if, instead of ascending to heaven to sit at the right hand of his Father, he had remained on earth, preaching practical truths, and showing by personal example and in-

dustry how the world could be rescued from that moral and intellectual darkness and despair to which 4,000 years of a corrupted theology had reduced them. This would have been the *true* salvation, the *best* redemption, and the *only* atonement necessary for the interest and progress of mankind.

But the Christian doctrine of atonement was not only unnecessary, but it was also unjust. It is a fundamental principle in the legislation of this country, that the innocent shall not be punished for the guilty. If a judge were to condemn to death an acknowledged innocent person, or a substitute for a criminal, he would that moment be held up as an object of horror and detestation. And if this is so with man, should it not be equally so with God? Now, what crime had Christ committed previous to his coming on earth, to cause him to deserve death? If none, then why was he made to suffer? If he did commit sin, where, and what was that sin? If he were punished for the crimes of others, where is the justice of that? Particularly when God, according to Christianity, had the power of accomplishing his object without the sacrifice of his son. Who would defend the conduct of human parents, who should cause their eldest child to be put to death because their other children had done wrong? Upon what principle of justice would it be tolerated? Would not the authors of such a deed be held up to universal execration? But then, this doctrine is also unjust to us. What power had we over the actions of Adam? and yet it is alleged that through the sin of Adam, we are all "born in sin and shapened in iniquity." The moment we enter this life, in our childish simplicity and youthful innocence, we are the victims of the wrath of God. How long would any government retain the confidence of the people of this country, if they were to introduce a measure enacting that all priests should die a lingering death in prison, simply because their ancestors, in moments of religious fury, disobeyed the command of right and equality, and laid desolate the earth with human slaughter? What sympathy would President Johnson receive, if he proposed that all future generations should suffer a particular punishment, because the Southerners of the 19th century dared to rebel for what they considered to be a righteous cause? Would the French people be exalted in

the estimation of the world, were they to persecute and banish the future heir to the throne, for no other reason than the fact that his father disobeyed all truth and right, and obtained his power through treachery, perjury, and wholesale slaughter? Were such things as these to occur in our days, we should have eloquent and long lamentations, deploring how rapidly we were returning to the ages of barbarism. This, however, would be but acting upon the principles of the atonement. Granting for a moment, that at a remote period of the world's history a sin was committed, will that justify the persecution, the suffering, the wrong, we have to endure? Are we on that account to be banished from eternal bliss! If so, the system that teaches it, is the very incarnation of injustice, and, as such, should be discountenanced by every true man.

The inconsistency of this scheme of Redemption is as palpable as its cruelty and injustice. We are told that the death of Christ was ordained before the foundation of the world; and we are also reminded that man was created perfect and immortal. The inconsistency here is so glaring, that it is really marvellous how it can pass undetected. If it were ordained that the Son of God should die for the redemption of the world, the transgressions of Adam and Eve were only a part of God's plan, and certainly did not merit any curse but rather a blessing. Further, if the mission of Christ on earth would have been fruitless unless he was crucified, then, instead of denouncing and abusing unfortunate Judas, he should be considered by Christians as a hero worthy of a monument being erected to his memory. Now if the death of Christ were ordained, so also was "the fall of man," for one depends upon the other. "For as in Adam all died, so in Christ shall all be made alive." If this be true, it was impossible for man to be created perfect. Besides, the very fact of man's "falling" or giving way to temptation, is a proof of his imperfection. Again, notwithstanding that Christ is represented as having made a full and complete satisfaction for all sin, in order that we may secure a share of what Christ died for, we are to lead a life of sacrifice and penitence. If Christ *did* pay the debt for our sin, why should we be called upon to make the second payment? Another inconsistency is to be found between the statement that God sent his Son to save the whole world, and the con-

duct of Christ while on earth. If universal salvation were the object of Christ's advent on earth, his mission has been a decided failure. Christ however never attempted to achieve this result. While thousands were dying without the knowledge of the Messiah, he, instead of going among ignorant nations, imparting what information he had, remained hurling bitter reproaches at the Pharisees in his own immediate neighbourhood. But Christ did not come to save the whole world; his own words clearly and unmistakably deny the supposition. His mission was to the Jews and the Jews alone. And even here his labours were not crowned with success. Following Christ to the close of his career, have we not a "sorry sight" to behold the culmination of inconsistency as witnessed in the garden of Gethsemane? Here we behold a man, who all his life had preached the utility of a faith, that was said not only to afford consolation through life, but that was also capable of robbing death of its terrors, yet when the hour of death approached, when the period had arrived for him to prove to the world the vitality of his faith, we find him tortured with agony and racked with fear. In that scene, which was not only to rivet the attention of an amazing multitude, but which was also to consecrate a life of divinity—a scene which was not only to be the great climax to the scheme of redemption, but was also to remain a lasting monument of love to a wondering people; at this moment when the hopes of his believers were about to be sealed, when he should have maintained his position with heroism, bravely and nobly, we find him weak, unrelying, and in bitter despair, praying that the cup might pass from him. Where is the consistency in this doctrine of atonement? Is it in the conduct of its hero, who came to die for man, yet when about to fulfil his destiny, implores to be allowed to shrink from the task? Is it in telling us that finite man had committed an infinite offence against an infinite God, therefore an infinite atonement was necessary, at the same time assuring us that it was only the manhood of Christ that suffered? If this be correct, it was after all but a finite atonement. Is it in teaching that Christ came as a voluntary sacrifice, yet was betrayed by man? Is it in condemning the majority of mankind because they are fulfilling the decree of their God? Is it in beholding a God of love and kindness, inflicting unnecessary torture upon his sensitive

Son? Is it in being informed by the voice of Christ that by asking he could obtain any amount of assistance from his Father, yet we find that his fervent supplications were unheeded and his dying prayers unanswered? Finally, is it in contemplating the mercy of a God, who after placing his Son on a felon's cross, allows that Son to yield up a sorrowful life, by uttering unsuccessful reproaches in those memorable words, "My God! my God! why hast thou forsaken me?"

But of what use has the Christian doctrine of the Atonement been to man? Where is its utility? Has it abolished the supposed effects of Adam's fall? Has it improved the condition of the people? Have we less pain, less misery, less wretchedness through the advent of Christ? Can we commit crime with greater impunity now than our forefathers did 2,000 years ago? Are Christians more valiant and brave than were the good old Romans? Has the erection of the Cross frightened the miscreant or appalled the tyrant? Has the voice from the heights of Sinai reached the captive, and bid the slave go free? Has it scattered error and cemented truth? Has it dethroned wrong and established right? Has it allayed the fears of the despondent and strengthened the hopes of the buoyant? In short, has it abolished ignorance, crime, and oppression, and made permanent knowledge, virtue, and justice? Or has it with all its power produced those conditions of society in which it shall be impossible for man to be depraved or poor? In the powerful words of the great Frenchman, "2,000 years have passed, during which entire nations have knelt before a gibbet, adoring in the sufferer who gave himself up to death—the Saviour of mankind. And yet what slavery still! What lepers in our moral world! What unfortunate beings in the visible and feeling world! What triumphant iniquity, what tyranny enjoying at its ease the scandal of its own impunity? The Saviour has come—whence comes salvation?"

Once impress the minds of the people with the idea that this scheme of redemption is true, and they are then made ready recipients for a gloomy faith. If we lament the poverty and wretchedness we behold, we are told that divinity has pronounced that "the poor shall never cease out of the land." If we seek to remove the sorrow and despair existing around us, we are reminded that they were "ap-

pointed curses to the sons of Adam." If we work to improve our condition we are taught that we "should learn to be content, to remain in that state of life in which it has pleased God to call us." When we endeavour to improve our minds, and cultivate our intellects, we come in contact with the statement "That we are of ourselves unable to do any good thing." If we seek to promote the happiness of others, we are assured that faith in Christ is of more importance than labour for man. Talk of an Atonement!—what can atone for all this wrong, all this misappropriation, and all this folly? For nearly 1,800 years have Christians preached "Christ and him crucified" to a misguided and wronged world. We of the 19th century have had but a vague idea of the extent and influence this doctrine once held over the minds of its believers. Although this erroneous belief is now giving way, still there are thousands who, with all its inconsistency and all its injustice, sincerely believe that man's eternal happiness depends upon the belief in the efficacy of the blood said to have been shed on Mount Calvary. This is the doctrine that has so permeated the minds of orthodox Christians, that they suffer their reason to be stifled, and their judgments perverted, till they indulge the forlorn and false idea that the reasoning of philosophers, the enchantments of poets, and the struggles of patriots, are all useless except purified by the "atoning blood of the Lamb." It is against such delusions as these we should for ever protest. It is this error which fosters the erroneous and retarding belief, that every thought that does not aspire to the throne of Christ, every action that is not sanctioned by his "scheme of salvation," every motive that does not proceed from a love to the "Saviour of the world" should be discouraged as antagonistic to our progress through life. Knowing this, every person instead of priding himself in being a Christian, should rather glory in being a true and useful man. And instead of trusting to the merits of Christ for salvation, mankind should pursue virtuous, honourable, and hopeful lives, feeling certain that had Christ never appeared, the world would not have gone on groping its way to progress through an utter moral and intellectual darkness. And finally, instead of buoying himself up by false hopes of a Redeemer, man should recognise the fact that if he needs redemption, he must redeem himself, by exercising earnest,

vigorous, active thought, by putting forth all his energies to do battle with the ills of life, by having more faith in the inherent goodness of humanity, and by looking at the world not as a vale of tears, but as a landscape of beauty and grandeur, wherein dwells sufficient to make man happy, prosperous, and virtuous.

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THE END.